

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The subject matter of claim 26 has been integrated within base claim 25. Claims 26 and 30-32 have been canceled.

Claims 1-24 and 37 stand withdrawn as being directed to non-elected subject matter.

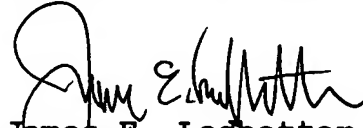
Claims 25-36 were rejected, under 35 USC §103(a), as being unpatentable over Hirahara et al. (US 2006/0257720). To the extent these rejections may be deemed applicable to the amended claims, the Applicants respectfully traverse.

The parent application, 10/386,449, for Hirahara has a filing date of March 13, 2003. The present application claims the benefit of Applicants' Japanese priority application, JP 2002-359314, which has a filing date of December 11, 2002 and which supports the subject matter of the pending claims. To perfect the claim to priority, Applicants enclose an English translation of the priority document along with a statement that the translation is believed to be accurate. It is submitted that Hirahara is disqualified as a reference against the present application and allowance of claims 25, 27-29, and 33-36 is deemed to be warranted.

In view of the above, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

If any issues remain which may best be resolved through a telephone communication, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



James E. Ledbetter
Registration No. 28,732

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JEL/DWW/att

Attorney Docket No. L7990.03103
STEVENS DAVIS, MILLER & MOSHER, L.L.P.
1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 850
P.O. Box 34387
Washington, D.C. 20043-4387
Telephone: (202) 785-0100
Facsimile: (202) 408-5200